

Can the Church Help You?

What's to be done?

How abolish poverty, oppression, and tyranny? How eliminate evil and injustice, weed out corruption, put an end to crime and murder?

How do away with wage slavery?

How secure liberty and well-being, joy and sunshine for every one?

'Turn to God,' commands the church; 'only a Christian life can save the world.'

'Let us pass a new law,' says the reformer; 'man must be compelled to be good.'

'Vote for me!' says the politician; 'I'll look after your interests.'

'The Trade Union,' advises your labour friend; 'that's your hope.'

'Only Socialism can abolish capitalism and do away with wage slavery' insists the Socialist.

'I'm a Bolshevik,' announces another; 'only the dictatorship of the proletariat will free the workers.'

'We'll remain slaves as long as we have rulers and masters,' says the Anarchist; 'only liberty can make us free.'

The Protectionist and the Free Trader, the Single Taxer and the Fabian, the Tolstoyan and the Mutualist, and a score of other social physicians all prescribe their particular medicine to cure the ills of society, and you wonder who is right and what the true solution might be.

You cannot make any greater mistake than to accept blindly this or that advice. You are sure to go wrong.

Only your own reason and experience can decide where the right road lies. Examine the various proposals and determine with your own common sense which is the most reasonable and practical. Only then will you know what is best for yourself, for the worker, and for mankind.

So let us look into the different plans.

Can the church help you?

Maybe you are a Christian, or a member of some other religion - Jew, Mormon, Mohammedan, Buddhist, or what not.

It makes no difference. A person should be free to believe whatever they please. The point is not what your religious faith is, but whether religion can abolish the evils we suffer from.

As I said before, we have only one life to live on this earth, and we want to make the best of it. What will happen to us after we are dead we don't know. The chances are we'll never know, and so it's no use bothering about it.

The question here is of life, not of death. It is the living we are concerned with; with you and me and others like ourselves. Can the world be made a better place for us to live in? That's what we want to know.

Can religion do it?

Christianity is about 2,000 years old. Has it abolished any evil? Has it done away with crime and murder, has it delivered us from

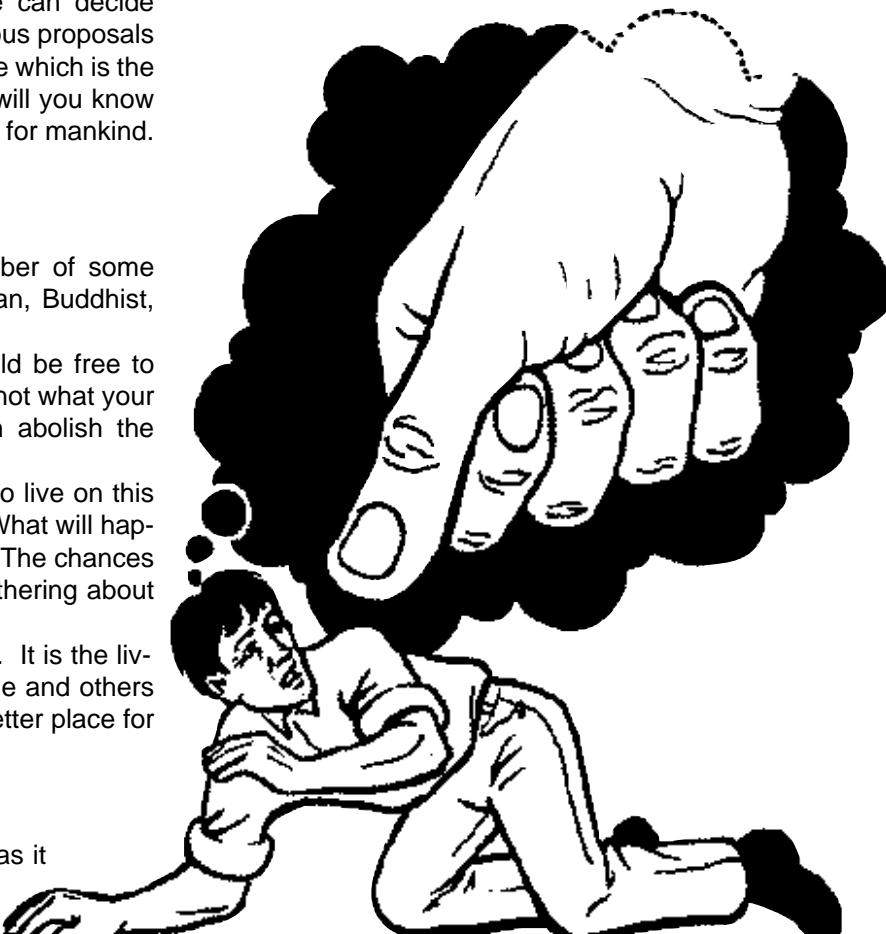
poverty and misery, from despotism and tyranny?

You know that it has not. You know that the Christian Church, like all other churches, has always been on the side of the masters, against the people. More: the church has caused worse strife and bloodshed than all the wars of kings and chiefs. Religion has divided mankind into opposing beliefs, and the bloodiest wars have been fought on account of religious differences. The church has persecuted people for their opinions, imprisoned and killed them. The Catholic Inquisition terrorised the whole world, tortured so-called heretics, and burned them alive. Other churches did the same when they had the power. They always sought to enslave and exploit the people, to keep them in ignorance and darkness. They condemned every effort of people to develop their mind, to advance, to improve their condition. They damned science, and silenced the people who thirsted for knowledge. Till this very day institutionalised religion is the Judas of its alleged Saviour. It approves of murder and war, of wage slavery and capitalistic robbery, and always stands for the 'law and order' that crucified the Nazarene.

Consider: Jesus wanted all people to be brothers and sisters, to live in peace and good will. The church upholds inequality, national strife, and war.

Jesus condemned the rich as vipers and oppressors of the poor. The church bows before the rich and accumulates vast wealth.

The Nazarene was born in a manger and remained a



pauper all his life. His alleged representatives and spokesmen on earth live in palaces.

Jesus preached meekness. The Princes of the Church are haughty and purse-proud.

'As you do unto the least of my children,' Christ said, 'you do unto me.' The church supports the capitalist system which enslaves little children and brings them to an early grave.

'Thou shalt not kill,' commanded the Nazarene. The church approves of executions and war.

Christianity is the greatest hypocrisy on record. Neither Christian nations nor individuals practice the precepts of Jesus. The early Christians did - and they were crucified, burned at the stake, or thrown to the wild animals in the Roman arena. Later the Christian Church compromised with those in power; she gained money and influence by taking the side of the tyrants against the people. She sanctioned everything that Christ condemned, and by that she won the good will and support of kings and masters. Today king, master, and priest are one trinity. They crucify Jesus daily; they glorify him with lip service and betray him for silver pieces; they praise his name and kill his spirit.

It is obvious that Christianity is the greatest sham and shame of humanity, and a complete failure because the Christian appeal is a lie. The churches do not practice what they preach. Moreover, they preach to you a gospel that they know you cannot live up to; they call upon you to become a 'better person' without giving you a chance to do so. On the contrary, the churches uphold the conditions that make you 'bad', while they command you to be 'good'. They benefit materially by the existing regime and are financially interested in keeping it up. The Catholic Church, the Protestant, Anglican, Christian Science, Mormon, and other denominations are among the wealthiest organisations in the world today. Their possessions represent the workers' blood and flesh. Their influence is proof of how the people are deluded. The prophets of religion are dead and forgotten; there remain only the profits.

'But if we would lead a truly Christian life,' you remark, 'the world would be different.'

You are right, my friend. But can you live a Christian life under present conditions? Does capitalism allow you to lead such a life? Will the government permit you to do so? Will even the church give you a chance to live a Christian life?

Just try it for a single day and see what happens to you.

As you leave your house in the morning, determine to be a Christian that day and speak only the truth. As you pass the policeman on the corner, remind him of Christ and His commandments. Tell him to 'love his enemy as himself', and persuade him to throw away his club and gun.

And when you meet the soldier on the street, impress it upon him that Jesus had said, 'Thou shalt not kill.'

In your shop or office speak the whole truth to your employer. Tell him of the Nazarene's warning. 'What shall it profit you to gain the whole earth and lose your soul and its salvation?' Mention that He commanded us to share our last loaf with the poor; that He said that the

rich 'man has no more chance of getting into heaven than the camel can pass through the eye of a needle.'

And when you are brought to court for disturbing the peace of the good Christians, remind the Judge: 'Judge not that ye be not judged.'

You will be declared a fool or a madman, and they will send you to a lunatic asylum or to prison.

You can see, then, what rank hypocrisy it is for the sky pilot to preach the Christian life to you. He knows as well as you that under capitalism and government there is no more chance to lead a Christian life than for a camel to 'pass through the needle's eye'. All those good folks who pretend to be Christians are just hypocrites who preach what cannot be practiced, for they don't give you any opportunity to lead a Christian life. No, not even to lead an ordinarily decent and honest life, without sham and deceit, without pretence and lying.

It is true that if we could follow the precepts of the Nazarene this would be a different world to live in. There would then be no murder and no war; no cheating and lying and profit making. There would be neither slave nor master, and we should all live like brothers and sisters, in peace and harmony. There would be neither poor nor rich, neither crime nor prison, but that would not be what the church wants. It would be what the Anarchists want, and that we shall discuss further on.

So, my friend, you have nothing to expect from the Christian Church or from any church. All progress and improvement in the world has been made against the will and wishes of the church. You may believe in whatever religion you please, but don't put any hope of social improvement in the church.

Alexander Berkman



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